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node, a cut-off radius prevents the granting of further memberships in the community for other nodes with even relatively close degrees of separation which may have been almost automatically granted while the total size of the membership in the community was relatively small. Specification, p. 12, lines 6-15. By limiting the total number of members in a community that has attained a relatively stable state of growth, relatively significant resource savings are obtained by the claimed invention.

The Office Action refers to the following section of Ingerman as anticipating an aspect of Claim 1. Ingerman, p. 10-11, para. 0091:

For example, it may be that in a particular messaging environment each messaging entity has 32 unique first degree contacts, each of the 32 unique first degree contacts also have 32 unique first degree contacts, etc. and that the messaging environment stores trust information for up to four degrees of separation. Accordingly, each messaging entity would have access to trust information for 32^4 , or approximately one-million, other messaging entities.

Clearly, the messaging environment described by Ingerman is pre-configured to limit membership in the community at a certain size. In fact, the Office Action argues that the Ingerman "messaging environment is configured to store trust information up to four degree of separation." Office Action, p. 3-4, para. 4, emphasis added. In contrast, Claim 1's cut-off radius is adaptive and changes over time based in part on a rate of growth of the community. Clearly, Ingerman teaches that the size of membership is constant/fixed. Thus, at least for this reason, Ingerman does not anticipate or make obvious Claim 1.

Additionally, amended independent Claims 16, 17, 18, and 19, are substantially similar to amended independent Claim 1, albeit different in some ways. Consequently, these independent claims are at least unanticipated and non-obvious for at least the same reasons as amended independent Claim 1. Furthermore, dependent Claims 2-15, are also novel and unobvious for at least substantially the same reasons as amended independent Claim 1, upon which they depend.

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